

ON SCRIPTURE

A PROLOGUE OR PREFACE
TO THE
GREAT BIBLE

AND

A FRUITFUL EXHORTATION
TO THE
READING OF HOLY
SCRIPTURE

THOMAS CRANMER,
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Transcription of 'A Prologue or Preface...' via the Internet Archive, drawn from the second edition of the Great Bible, *The Byble in Englyshe*, (London: Edward Whitchurch, 1540).

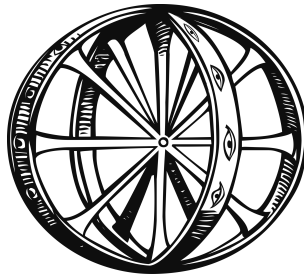
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Transcription of 'A Fruitful Exhortation...' from *Certain sermons or homilies appointed to be read in churches* (London: Richard Grafton, 1551).

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'Prologue or Preface...' and 'A Fruitful Exhortation...'
set in JSL Blackletter (with JSL Ancient)
<<https://www.shipbrook.net/jeff/typograf.html>>

Modern English set in Scala
Title set in Hesse Antiqua



Oxford: Quadriga, 2019

A reader who attends to the archaic versions in the left-hand column of the following texts will quickly observe that the practices of orthography, abbreviation, and punctuation in the sixteenth century seem startlingly capricious to a modern eye. The 'Prologue' and 'Exhortation' show the abbreviated forms of 'thee,' 'that,' and several other words made by placing an identifying letter over the first letter of the word (shown here by the use of a superscript), with a 'y' substituting for the Middle English 'þ'; the abbreviated forms of 'vowel + nasal consonant' made by a bar like a tilde over the vowel (here reproduced with a tilde or circumflex, depending on what the typeface makes available); the near interchangeability of 'i' and 'y'; the use of 'long s' and 'ragged r' in typography; and fluid, inconsistent spellings of even plain and familiar words.

Note also that different editions show variation not only in spelling and punctuation, but sometimes also in the choice of the words themselves.

The prologue,

¶ A prologue or p̄face made by the
moost reuerende father in God, Thomas
Archbysshop of Canterbury
Metropolytan and Prymate of Englande.

For two sondre sortes of people it semeth moche necessary that somthyng be sayde in the entyre of thys booke, by the waye of a p̄face or prologue: wherby herafter it maye be both y^e better accepted of them which hitherto coulde not well beare it: & also the better vsed of them, which hertofore haue myslused it. For truly, some there are that be to slowe, and nede the spurre: some other seme to quicke, & nede more of the byddell. Some loose theyr game by shorte shotyng, some by, ouer shotyng. Some walke to moche on the lefte hande, some to moche on the ryght. In the former sorte be all they that refuse to reade, or to heare redde the scripture in theyr vulgar tonges, moch worse they that also let, or discourage the other from the readyng or bearyng thereof. In the latter sorte be they, which by theyr inordinate readyng, vndiscrete speakyng, contentious disputyng, or otherwys, by theyr licencious lyuyng, flauder and hynder the worde of God, mooste of all other, wherof they wolde seme to be greatest furtherers. These two sortes albeit they be moost farre vnylike the one to the other, yet they both deserue in effecte lyke reproche. Wherfor can I well tell whyther of them I may iudge the more offender, hym that doth obstinately refuse so godlye and goodly knowledge: or hym that so ungodly and so ungoodly doth abuse the same: And as touchyng the former I wolde maruayle moche that any man shulde be so madde, as to refuse in darcknes, lyght; in hunger, foode; in colde, fyr; for the worde of God is lyght: *Lucerna pedibus meis, verbum*

The Prologue,

¶A prologue or preface made by the
most reverend father in God, Thomas
Archbishop of Canterbury,
Metropolitan and Primate of England

For two sundry sorts of people, it seemeth much necessary that something be said in the entry of this book by the way of a preface or prologue: whereby hereafter it may be both the better accepted of them which hitherto could not well bear it: and also the better used of them, which heretofore have misused it. For truly, some there are that be too slow and need the spur; some other seem too quick, and need more of the bridle. Some lose their game by short shooting, some by overshooting. Some walk too much on the left hand, some too much on the right. In the former sort be all they that refuse to read or to hear read the scripture in their vulgar tongues; much worse, they that also let or discourage the other from the reading or hearing thereof. In the latter sort be they which by their inordinate reading, indiscrete speaking, contentious disputing, or otherwise by their licentious living, slander and hinder the word of God most of all other, whereof they would seem to be greatest furtherers. These two sorts, albeit they be most far unlike the one to the other, yet they both deserve in effect like reproach. Neither can I well tell whyther of them I may judge the more offender, him that doth obstinately refuse so godly and goodly knowledge, or him that so ungodly and so ungoodly doth abuse the same. And as touching the former, I would marvel much that any man should be so mad, as to refuse in darkness, light; in hunger, food; in cold, fire. For the word of God is light: *Lucerna pedibus meis, verbum*

tuum. Foode: Non in solo pane uiuit homo, sed in omni uerbo dei. Hyper:
 Ignem ueni mittere in terram, et quid uolo, nisi ut ardeat? I wolde
 maruayle (I saye at thys) saue that I consyder, howe moche custome and
 vsage maye do. So that yf there were a people as some wypte, de
 Cymeriis, which neuer sawe the sunne, by reason that they be situated
 farre towarde the north pole, and be enclosed and ouershadowed with hygh
 mountaynes: it is credyble and lyke ynough, that yf, by the power and will
 of God, the mountaynes shulde synke downe, and geue place, that the lyght
 of the sunne might haue enteraunce to them: at the fyrst, some of them
 wolde be offended therewith. And the olde proverbe affermeth, that
 after tyllage of corne was fyrst founde: many delyted more to feade of
 mastie and acoynes, wherewith they had ben accustomed, then to eate breed
 made of good corne. Soche is the nature of custome that it causeth vs to
 beare all thynges well and easelye, wherewith we haue bene accustomed,
 and to be offended with all thynges therunto contrary. And therfore, I can
 well thynke them worthy pardon, whych at the comyng abroade of
 scripture doubted and dreyne backe. But such as wyll persyste styll in theyr
 wyllfulnes, I muste nedes iudge, not onely foolyshe, frowarde and
 obstinate: but also peuysshe, peruerse and indurate. And yet, yf the matter
 shulde be tryed by custome, we myght also allege custome for the readyng
 of the scripture in the vulgare tonge, and prescribe the more auncient
 custome. For it is not moche aboue one hundreth yere agoe, sens scripture
 hath not bene accustomed to be redde in the vulgar tonge within this
 realme, and many hundred yeres before that, it was translated & redd in
 the Saxones tonge, which at that tyme was oure mothers tonge. Wherof
 there remayneth yet diuers coppes fouded lately in olde abbeis, of soch
 antique maners of wrytyng and speaking, that fewe men

tuum.¹ Food: *Non in solo pane viuit homo, sed in omni verbo dei*.² Fire: *Ignem veni mittere in terram, & quid volo nisi vt ardeat*?³ I would marvel (I say at this) save that I consider how much custom and usage may do. So that if there were a people as some write, *de Cymeriis*,⁴ which never saw the sun, by reason that they be situated far toward the North Pole, and be enclosed and overshadowed with high mountains, it is credible and like enough, that if by the power and will of God, the mountains should sink down and give place, that the light of the sun might have entrance to them: at the first some of them would be offended therewith. And the old proverb affirmeth, that after tillage of corn was first found, many delighted more to feed of mast and acorns, wherewith they had been accustomed, than to eat bread made of good corn. Such is the nature of custom, that it causeth us to bear all things well and easily, wherewith we have been accustomed, and to be offended with all things thereunto contrary. And therefore, I can well think them worthy pardon, which at the coming abroad of scripture doubted and drew back. But such as will persist still in their wilfulness, I must needs judge not only foolish, froward* and obstinate, but also peevish, perverse, and indurate†. And yet, if the matter should be tried by custom, we might also allege custom for the reading of the scripture in the vulgar tongue, and prescribe the more ancient custom. For it is not much above one hundred years ago, since scripture hath not been accustomed to be read in the vulgar tongue within this realm, and many hundred years before that, it was translated and read in the Saxons' tongue, which at that time was our mother tongue. Whereof there remaineth yet divers copies found lately in old abbeys, of such antique manners of writing and speaking, that few men

¹. 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet', Ps 119:105.

². 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God' Dt 8:3.

³. 'I am come to cast fire on the earth. And what will I, but that it be kindled?', Lk 12:49.

⁴. 'Of the Cimmerians'

nowe ben able to reade and understande the. And when this language
 waxed olde and out of comen vsage, because folke shulde not lacke the frute
 of readyng, it was agayne translated in the newer language. Wherof yet
 also many copies remayne and be dayly founde. But nowe to lett passe
 custome, and to weye as wyse men euer shulde, the thyng in hys awne
 nature. Let vs here discusse, What it auayleth scripture to be had and
 redde of the lay and bulgare people. And to this question I entende here to
 saye nothyng: but that was spoken and wrytten by the noble doctoure and
 moost morall diuine saynt John Chrysostome, in hys thynde sermon de
 Lazaro: albeit; I wyl be somthyng shorter, and gether the matter into
 feawer wordes and lesse rowme the he doth there: because I wolde not be
 tedypous. He exorteth there hys audience, that euery man shulde reade by
 him selfe at home in the meane dayes and tyme, betwene sermon and
 sermon: to the entente they myght both more profoundly fyre in their
 myndes and memoeries that he had sayde before upon soch textes, wherupon
 he had allreadye preached: and also that they myght haue theyr myndes
 the more ready and better prepared to receyue and perceauie that which he
 shulde sey frome thenforth in hys sermones, upō soche textes, as he had not
 yet declared and preached upon: therfore sayth he there: My comen vsage
 is to geue you warnynge before, what matter I intende after to entreate
 vpon, y^e you poure selues in the meane dayes maye take the boke in hande,
 reade, weye, and perceyue the summe and effect of the mattier: and marke
 what hath bene declared, and what remayneth yet to be declared: so y^e
 therby poure mynde maye be the more furnyshed, to here the reste, that
 shal be sayde. And that I exhorde you (sayth he) and euer haue & wyl
 exhorde you, y^e ye (not only here in the churche) geue eare to that, that is
 sayde by the preacher: but that also, when ye be at home in poure houses, ye
 applye poure selues from tyme to tyme to the readyng of the holy
 scriptures: which thyng also I neuer lynne to beate into the eares of them
 that bene

now be able to read and understand them. And when this language waxed old and out of common usage, because folk should not lack the fruit of reading, it was again translated into the newer language. Whereof yet also many copies remain and be daily found. But now to let pass custom, and to weigh as wise men ever should the thing in his own nature. Let us here discuss, What it availeth scripture to be had and read of the lay and vulgar people. And to this question I intend here to say nothing: but that was spoken and written by the noble doctor and most moral divine, saint John Chrysostom in his third sermon *de Lazaro*¹; albeit, I will be something shorter, and gather the matter into fewer words and less room than he doth there, because I would not be tedious. He exhorteth there his audience, that every man should read by himself at home in the mean days and time, between sermon and sermon: to the intent they might both more profoundly fix in their minds and memories that he had said before upon such texts, whereupon he had already preached: and also that they might have their minds the more ready and better prepared to receive and perceive that which he should say from thenceforth in his sermons, upon such texts, as he had not yet declared and preached upon: therefore saith he there, My common usage is to give you warning before, what matter I intend after to entreat upon, that you yourselves in the mean days may take the book in hand, read, weigh, and perceive the sum and effect of the matter; and mark what hath been declared and what remaineth yet to be declared; so that thereby your mind may be the more furnished to hear the rest that shall be said. And that I exhort you (saith he) and ever have and will exhort you, that ye (not only here in the church) give ear to that, that is said by the preacher; but that also when ye be at home in your houses, ye apply yourselves from time to time to the reading of the holy scriptures, which thing also I never lin² to beat into the ears of them that be

¹. 'On Lazarus,' in seven discourses.

². lin: *to cease, to stop from*

my fampliers, and with whom I haue pꝛuate aquayntaunce and
 conuersacyon. Lett no man make excuse and saye: (sayeth he) I am busied
 aboute mattiers of the comon welth, I beare this office or y^e, I am a
 craftes man, I must applye myne occupacyon, I haue a wyfe, my
 chyliden must be fedde, my householde must I pꝛouyde for. Briefly I am a
 man of the world, it is not for me to reade the scriptures, that belongeth to
 the that hath bedden the world saye well, which lyue in solitarenes and
 contemplatyon, that hath bene brought up, and contynually nospilled in
 learnynge and religyon. To thys answering: what sayest thou man
 (sayeth he) is it not for the to studie and to reade the scripture, because thou
 art encobzed and distracte with cures and busynes? So moche the more it is
 behouefull for the to haue defence of scriptures, howe moche thou art the
 more distressed in worldly daungers. They that bene free and farre from
 trouble and entremedlynge of worldly thinges, lyueth in sauegarde and
 tranquilityte, and in the calme or within a sure haben. Thou art in the
 myddest of the see of worldly wickednesse, and therfore thou nedeest the
 more of ghostly succoure and comfort: they lytte farre from the strokes of
 battayll, and farre out of goneshouse, and therfore they be but seldome
 wounded: thou y^e standest in the forefront of the hoost, and nyest to thyne
 enemyes, muste nedes take now and then many strokes, and be greuously
 wounded. And therfore thou hast more nede to haue thy remedies and
 medecynes at hande. Thy wyfe prouoketh the to anger, thy chylde
 gyueth the occasyon to take sorowe and pensyuenes, thyne enemyes
 lyeth in wayte for the, thy frende (as thou takest him) somtyme enuyeth
 the, thy neyghboure mysteposteth the, or pycketh quarels agaynst the, thy
 mate or partynner undermyneth the, thy lord iudge, or iustyce threteneth
 the, pouertye is paynefull to the, the losse of thy deare and welbeloued
 causeth the to mozne. Prosperite exalteth the, aduersyte byngeth the lowe.
 Briefly, so diuerse and so manyfolde occasyons of cares, tribulacyons and
 temptacions

my familiars, and with whom I have private acquaintance and conversation. Let no man make excuse and say (saith he): I am busied about matters of the common wealth; I bear this office, or that; I am a craftsman, I must apply my occupation, I have a wife, my children must be fed, my household must I provide for. Briefly, I am a man of the world, it is not for me to read the scriptures, that belongeth to them that have bidden the world farewell, which live in solitariness and contemplation, and have been brought up and continually nosylled¹ in learning and religion. To this answering: What sayest thou man? (saith he) Is it not for thee to study and to read the scripture, because thou art encumbered and distracted with cares and business? So much the more it is behoveful for thee to have defense of scriptures, how much thou art the more distressed in worldly dangers. They that be free and far from trouble and intermeddling of worldly things liveth in safeguard and tranquility, and in the calm or within a sure haven. Thou art in the midst of the sea of worldly wickedness, and therefore thou needest the more of ghostly² succor and comfort! They sit far from the strokes of battle, and far out of gunshot, and therefore they be but seldom wounded: thou that standest in the forefront of the host, and nighest to thine enemies, must needs take now and then many strokes, and be grievously wounded. And therefore thou hast most need to have thy remedies and medicines at hand. Thy wife provoketh thee to anger, thy child giveth thee occasion to take sorrow and pensiveness, thine enemies lie in wait for thee, thy friend (as thou takest him) sometime envieth thee, thy neighbor misreporteth thee, or picketh quarrels against thee, thy mate or partner undermineth thee, thy lord judge, or justice, threateneth thee, poverty is painful to thee, the loss of thy dear and well-beloved causeth thee to mourn. Prosperity exalteth thee, adversity bringeth thee low. Briefly, so divers and so manifold occasions of cares, tribulations and temptations

^{1.} nosylled: *nurtured, raised*

^{2.} ghostly: *spiritual*

besetteth the and beseteth the rounde aboute. Where canst thou haue armour or forteresse agaynst thyne assautes? Where canst thou haue salve for thy sores, but of holy scripture? Thy fleshe must nedes be prone and subiect to fleshly lustes, which dayly walkest and art conuersaunte amongst women, seyst theyr bewtyes, set forth to the eye, hearest theyr nyse and waton wordes, smellst their balme, cyuet and muske, with many other lyke prouocations and steringes, except thou hast in a redynes wherewith to suppressse and auoyde them, which cannot elles where be had, but onely out of the holy scriptures. Lett vs reade and seke all the remedies that we can, and all shal be lytell ynough. Howe shall we then do, yf we suffer and take dayly woundes, and whā we haue done, wyllytte still and serche for no medecynes? Doest thou not marke and consider, howe the smyth, mason, or carpenter, or any other handy craftesman, what neade so euer he be in, what other shyfte soeuer he make, he wylly not sell or laye to pledge the toles of hys occupacyon, for then howe shulde he worke his feate or get his lyuinge therby? Of lyke mynde and affectyon ought we to be towardes holpe scripture, for as mallettes, hammars, sawes, chesylles, axes, and hatchettes, be the tooles of theyr occupacyon. So bene the bokes of the prophetes, and apostelles, and all holpe wypte inspired by the holy ghost, the instrumentes of oure saluacyon. Wherefore, let us not stycke to bye and prouyde vs the Wyble, that is to saye, the bookes of holy scripture. And lett us thynke that to be a better Iuell in our house then eyther golde or syluer. For lyke as theues bene lothe to assaute an house, where they knowe to be good armour and artillery, so wheresoeuer these holy and ghostly bookes bene occupied, there nether the deuell, nor none of his angelles dare come neare: And they that occuppe them bene in moche sauegarde, and hauen greate consolacyon, and bene the readyer vnto all goodnes, the slower to all euyl, and yf they haue done any thing amysse, anone euen by the syght of

besetteth thee and besiegeth thee round about. Where canst thou have armour or fortress against thine assaults? Where canst thou have salves for thy sores but of holy scripture? Thy flesh must needs be prone and subject to fleshly lusts, which daily walkest and art conversant amongst women, seest their beauties set forth to the eye, hearest their nice and wanton words, smellest their balm, civet and musk, with many other like provocations and stirrings, except thou hast in readiness wherewith to suppress and avoid them, which cannot elsewhere be had, but only out of the holy scriptures. Let us read and seek all the remedies that we can, and all shall be little enough. How shall we then do, if we suffer and take daily wounds, and when we have done, will sit still and search for no medicines? Dost thou not mark and consider how the smith, mason, or carpenter, or any other handy craftsman, what need soever he be in, what other shift¹ soever he make, he will not sell nor lay to pledge the tools of his occupation, for then how should he work his feat or get his living thereby? Of like mind and affection ought we to be towards holy scripture, for as mallets, hammers, saws, chisels, axes, and hatchets be the tools of their occupation. So be the books of the prophets, and apostles, and all holy writ inspired by the holy ghost, the instruments of our salvation. Wherefore let us not stick² to buy and provide us the Bible, that is to say, the books of holy scripture. And let us think that to be a better jewel in our house than either gold or silver. For like as thieves be loath to assault an house where they know to be good armour and artillery, so wheresoever these holy and ghostly books be occupied, there neither the devil nor none of his angels dare come near. And they that occupy them be in much safeguard, and have a great consolation, and be the readier unto all goodness, the slower to all evil, and if they have done anything amiss, anon even by the sight of

¹ shift: *means of accomplishing something*

² stick: *balk, scruple*

the bookes they? consciences bene admonished, and they waxesen soꝝy & ashamed of the facte. Paraduventure, they will saye vnto me: howe and yf we vnderstande nott that we reade, that is conteyned in the bokes. What then? Suppose, thou vnderstande not the depe and pꝛofoude misteryes of scriptures, yet can it not be, but that moche frute and holynes must come and growe vnto the by the reading: foꝝ it cannot be that thou shuldest be ignoꝝaunte in all thinges alyke. For the holye ghost hath so oꝛdered and attempered the scꝛyptures, that in them aswell publicanes, fysshers, and shepherders may fynde they? edyfication, as greate doctoures they? erudityon: foꝝ those bookes were not made to bayne gloꝝye, lyke as were the wꝛytynges of the gentyle philosophers and rethoꝝicyans, to the entent the makers shulde be hadd in admiration foꝝ they? hye styles and obscure maner of wꝛytyng, wherof nothyng can be vnderstande without a master oꝝ an expositoure. But the apostelles and pꝛophetes wꝛote they? bokes so, that they? speciall entent and purpose might be vnderstanded and perceaued of euery reader, which was nothing but the edificacyon and amendemente of the lyfe of them that readeth oꝝ heareth it. Who is it that reading oꝝ hearing reade in the goꝝpell, Blessed are they that bene meke. Blessed are they that bene mercyfull. Blessed are they that bene of cleane herte: and soch other lyke places, can percepue nothing excepte he haue a master to teache hym what it meaneth? Likewyse, the signes and myꝛacles with all other hystoꝝyes of the doynge of Christ oꝝ hys apostells, who is ther, of so simple witte and capacite, but he maye be able to perceauie and vnderstande them? These be but excuses and cloyes foꝝ the rayne, and keuerynges of they? awne ydell slouthfulnes, I canot vnderstande it. What maruaylle? Howe shuldest thou vnderstande, yf thou wylt not reade, noꝝ loke vꝑo it? take the bookes into thyne handes, reade the hole stoꝝpe, and that thou vnderstandest kepe it well in memoꝝye: that thou vnderstandest not, reade it agayne and agayne: yf thou can nether so come by it, counsaylle with some other that is better learned. Go to thy curate and pꝛeacher, shewe thy

the books their consciences be admonished, and they wax sorry and ashamed of the fact. Peradventure, they will say unto me: how and if we understand not that we read, that is contained in the books. What then? Suppose thou understand not the deep and profound mysteries of scriptures, yet can it not be, but that much fruit and holiness must come and grow unto thee by the reading: for it cannot be that thou shouldest be ignorant in all things alike. For the holy ghost hath so ordered and attempered the scriptures, that in them as well publicans, fishers, and shepherds may find their edification, as great doctors their erudition: for those books were not made to vain glory, like as were the writings of the gentile philosophers and rhetoricians, to the intent the makers should be had in admiration for their high styles and obscure manner of writing, whereof nothing can be understood without a master or an expositor. But the apostles and prophets wrote their books so, that their special intent and purpose might be understood and perceived of every reader, which was nothing but the edification and amendment of the life of them that readeth or heareth it. Who is it, that reading or hearing read in the gospel, Blessed are they that be meek. Blessed are they that be merciful. Blessed are they that be of clean heart. and such other like places, can perceive nothing except he have a master to teach him what it meaneth? Likewise, the signs and miracles with all other histories of the doings of Christ or his apostles, who is there, of so simple wit and capacity, but he may be able to perceive and understand them? These be but excuses and cloaks for the rain, and coverings of their own idle slothfulness. I cannot understand it. What marvel? How shouldest thou understand, if thou wilt not read, nor look upon it? Take the books into thine hands, read the whole story, and that thou understandest, keep it well in memory; that thou understandest not, read it again, and again. If thou can neither so come by it, counsel with some other that is better learned. Go to thy curate and preacher; show thy-

selfe to be desirous to knowe and learne. And I doubt not, but God seyinge thy diligence and redynesse (yf no man elles teache the) wyll hym selfe wouchsafte w^t hys holy sprete to illuminate the, and to open vnto the that which was locked from the.

Remēber the Eunnuchus of Candace quene of Ethioppe, which albeit he was a man of a wyld and barbarous countrie, and one occupyed with worldly cures and busynesses, yet rydyng in his charet, he was readyng the scripture. Now consider, yf thys man passyng in hys iorney, was so diligent as to reade the scripture, what thinkest thou of like was he wote to do sittynge at home? Agayne, he that letted not to reade, albeit he dyd not vnderstande, What dyd he then, trowest thou, after that when he had learned and had gotten vnderstanding? For that thou maye well knowe that he vnderstode not what he reade: herken what Philippe there sayth vnto hym. Vnderstandest thou what thou readeest? And he nothynge ashamed to confesse his ignoraunce, answereth: Howe shulde I vnderstande haupng no body to shewe me the wey? Lo when he lacked one to shewe hym the weye and to expounde to hym the scriptures, yet dyd he reade: and therfore God the rather prouyded for hym a gyde of the wey, that taught hym to vnderstande it. God perceyued his wyllinge and towarde mynde: and therfore he sent hym a teacher by and by. Therfore, let no man be negligēt about hys awne health and saluation: though thou haue not Philippe allwayes when thou woldest, the holy ghost, which then moued and stered by Philippe, wil be ready and not faile the yf thou do thy diligence accordingly. All these thinges bene wrytten for vs to oure edifycatiō and amendement, which be bozne towarde the latter ende of the worlde. The readyng of scriptures is a greate and strong bulwarke or fosteresse against synne, the ignoraunce of the same is the greater ruyne and destruccyon of them that will not knowe it. That is the thing that

self to be desirous to know and learn. And I doubt not, but God seeing thy diligence and readiness (if no man else teach thee) will himself vouchsafe with his holy spirit to illuminate thee, and to open unto thee that which was locked from thee.

Remember the Eunuch of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, which albeit he was a man of a wild and barbarous country, and one occupied with worldly cares and businesses, yet riding in his chariot, he was reading the scripture. Now consider, if this man passing in his journey, was so diligent as to read the scripture, what thinkest thou of like was he wont to do sitting at home? Again, he that letted¹ not to read, albeit he did not understand, What did he then, trowest² thou, after that when he had learned and gotten understanding? For that thou mayest well know that he understood not what he read: hearken what Philip there saith unto him. Understandest thou what thou readest? And he, nothing ashamed to confess his ignorance, answered, How should I understand, having nobody to show me the way? Lo when he lacked one to show him the way, and to expound to him the scriptures, yet did he read; and therefore God the rather provided for him a guide of the way, that taught him to understand it. God perceived his willing and toward³ mind: and therefore he sent him a teacher by and by. Therefore let no man be negligent about his own health and salvation: though thou have not Philip always when thou wouldest, the holy ghost, which then moved and stirred up Philip, will be ready and not fail thee if thou do thy diligence accordingly. All these things be written for us to our edification and amendment, which be borne towards the latter end of the world. The reading of the scriptures is a great and strong bulwark or fortress against sin, the ignorance of the same is the greater ruin and destruction of them that will not know it. That is the thing that

¹ letted: *omitted, neglected*

² trowest: *suppose, believe*

³ toward: *willing, compliant*

bringeth in herespes, that is it, that causeth all corrupte and peruerse
 lyuing, that it is, y^e bringeth all thinges out of good order. Hetherto, all
 that I haue sayde, I haue take and gathered out of the forsayde sermon of
 this holy doctour saynct John Chrysostome. Nowe yf I shulde in lyke
 maner bring forth, what the selfe same doctour speaketh in other places,
 and what other doctoures and wyttters saye, concerning the same purpose,
 I myght seme to you to wyrite another Byble, rather then to make a
 preface to the Byble. Wherefore in fewe wordes to comprehend the
 largenes and vtilytie of the scripture, holwe it conteyneth frutefull
 instruction and erudityon for euery man, yf any thynges be necessarye to
 be learned: of the holpe scripture we maye learne it. If falshe shall be
 repproued, therof we maye gather wherwith all. If any thyng be to be
 corrected and amended, yf there nede any exhortation or consolatyon, of the
 scripture we maye well learne. In the scryptures be the fatte pastures of
 the soule, therein is no venymouse meate, no unholosome thyng, they be the
 very dayntie and pure fedynge. He that is ignoraunte, shall fynde there
 what he sholde learne. He that is a peruerse synner, shall there fynde his
 damnatyon to make hym to tremble for feare. He that laboureth to serue
 God shall fynde ther his glozpe, & the promissios of eternall lyfe, exhortyng
 him moze diligently to laboure. Herin maye pynces learne holwe to
 gouerne their subiectes: Subiectes obediēce, loue and drede to theyr
 pynces. Husbandes, holwe they shulde be haue thē vnto their wyfes: holwe
 to educate theyr chyliden and seruaūtes. And contrary the wyfes,
 chyliden, and seruaūtes maye know there dūte to theyr husbandes,
 parētes and masters. Here maye all maner of persons, men, women,
 yonge, olde, learned, vnlerned, ryche, pooze, prestes, laymen, Lordes,
 Ladyes, offycers, tenaūtes, and meane men, virgyns, wyfes wedolwes,
 lawers, marchaūtes, artifycers, husbāde men, and almaner of persons
 of what estate or condityon soeuer they be, maye in thys booke learne all
 thynges what they ought to beleue, what they ought to do, & what they

bringeth in heresies, that is it that causeth all corrupt and perverse living, that it is that bringeth all things out of good order. Hitherto all that I have said, I have taken and gathered out of the foresaid sermon of this holy doctor, saint John Chrysostom. Now if I should in like manner bring forth, what the selfsame doctor speaketh in other places, and what other doctors and writers say, concerning the same purpose, I might seem to you to write another Bible, rather than to make a preface to the Bible. Wherefore in few words to comprehend the largeness and utility of the scripture, how it containeth fruitful instruction and erudition for every man, if anything be necessary to be learned, of the holy scripture we may learn it. If falsehood shall be reproved, thereof we may gather wherewithal. If anything be to be corrected and amended, if there need any exhortation or consolation, of the scripture we may well learn. In the scriptures be the fat pastures of the soul, therein is no venomous meat, no unwholesome thing; they be the very dainty and pure feeding. He that is ignorant, shall find there what he should learn. He that is a perverse sinner, shall there find his damnation to make him to tremble for fear. He that laboureth to serve God, shall find there his glory, and the promises of eternal life, exhorting him more diligently to labour. Herein may princes learn how to govern their subjects; subjects obedience, love, and dread to their princes; husbands how they should behave them unto their wives, how to educate their children and servants. And contrary the wives, children, and servants may know their duty to their husbands, parents, and masters. Here may all manner of persons, men, women, young, old, learned, unlearned, rich, poor, priests, laymen, Lords, Ladies, officers, tenants, and mean¹ men, virgins, wives, widows, lawyers, merchants, artificers, husbandmen, and all manner of persons of what estate or condition soever they be, may in this book learn all things what they ought to believe, what they ought to do, and what they

¹ mean: *inferior, lowly*

shulde not do, aswell concerning almyghtye God as also concernynge them
 selues and all other. Breiflye to the readyng of the scripture none can be
 enemye, but that eyther be so sycke, that they loue not to here of any
 medecyne: or els that be so ignoraunte, that they knowe not scripture to be
 the most helthfull medecyne. Therfore as touchynge thys former parte. I
 wyll here conclude and take it as a conclusion suffycientlye determyned
 and approued, that it is conuenient and good, the scripture to be redd of all
 sortes & kyndes of people, and in the vulgare tonge without farther
 allegatiōs or probaciōs for the same, which shall not nede, syns y^t thys one
 place of John Chrysostome is ynough & suffyciente to perswade all thē y^t be
 not frowardly and peruerslye sett in their awne wyllfull opinion,
 speciallye now that the kynges hyghnes beyng supreme hede nexte vnder
 Christe of thys churche of Englande hath, approued with his royal assente
 the setting furthe herof, which onely to all true and obedient subiectes ought
 to be a suffyciente reason, for the allowance of the same, without farther
 delaye, reclamatiō, or resystaunce although there were no p̄face nor
 other reason here in exp̄essed. Therfore nowe to come to the secōde and
 latter parte of my purpose there is nothyng so good in thys worlde but it
 maye be abused, and turned from frutefull and holysome, to hurtfull and
 nopsome. What is there aboue, better then the sunne, the moone, the
 starres? Yet was ther y^t toke occasion by the great bewtye and vertue of
 them to dishonoure God, and to defyle them selues with ydolatrye, geuing
 the honour of the lyving God and creatour of all thinges, to suche thynges
 as he had created.

What is there here beneth, better then fyr, water, meates, drynckes,
 metalles of golde, syluer, yron and stele? Yet, we se daylie great harme
 and moch mischefe, done by euery one of these, aswell for lacke of wysdome

should not do, as well concerning almighty God, as also concerning themselves and all other. Briefly to the reading of scripture none can be enemy, but that either be so sick, that they love not to hear of any medicine; or else that be so ignorant, that they know not scripture to be the most healthful medicine. Therefore, as touching this former part. I will here conclude and take it as a conclusion sufficiently determined and approved, that it is convenient¹ and good, the scriptures to be read of all sorts and kinds of people, and in the vulgar tongue without farther allegations or probations for the same, which shall not need, since that this one place of John Chrysostom is enough and sufficient to persuade all them that be not frowardly and perversely set in their own wilful opinion, specially now that the king's highness, being supreme head next under Christ of this church of England, hath approved with his royal assent the setting forth hereof, which only to all true and obedient subjects ought to be a sufficient reason, for the allowance of the same, without farther delay, reclamation, or resistance, although there were no preface nor other reason herein expressed. Therefore now to come to the second and latter part of my purpose: there is nothing so good in this world, but it may be abused, and turned from fruitful and wholesome, to hurtful and noisome. What is there above better than the sun, the moon, the stars? Yet was there that took occasion by the great beauty and virtue of them to dishonour God, and to defile themselves with idolatry, giving the honour of the living God and creator of all things, to such things as he had created.

What is there here beneath, better than fire, water, meats, drinks, metals of gold, silver, iron, and steel? Yet, we see daily great harm and much mischief, done by every one of these, as well for lack of wisdom

¹ convenient: *agreeable, appropriate*

and proupydence of them that suffer euyl, as by the malice of them that worketh the euyl. Thus to them that be euyl of them selues, every thyng setteth forwarde and encreaseeth their euyl, be it of his awne nature a thing neuer so good, lyke as contrarelye, to them that studyeth and endeuoreth them selues to goodnes, every thyng preuaileth them, and profiteth vnto good: be it of hys awne nature a thyng neuer so badde. As saynct Paul sayth, *hii qui diligunt deum omnia cooperantur in bonum*: euen as out of moost venomouse wormes is made triacle, the moost soueraygne medecine for the preseruatyon of mans helth in tyme of danger. Wherefore I wolde aduise you all, that cometh to the readyng or hearpng of this boke, which is the worde of God, the mooste precious Iuell, and mooste holy relyque, that remayneth vpon earth, that ye bypng with you the feare of God, and that ye do it with all due reuerence, and vse youre knowledge therof, not to vayne glorie and friuolouse disputatio: but to the honour of God, encrease of vertu, and edifycation both of your selues and other. And to the entent that my wordes maye be the more regarded, I wyl vse in this parte the auctorite of saynct Gregorpe Nazianzene, lyke as in the other I dyd of S. John Chrysostome. It appereth that in hys tyme there were some (as I feare me, there bene also now at these dayes a great number) which were ydell bablers, and talkers of the scripture out of ceason, and all good order, and without any encrease of vertu, or exaple of good lyuing, to them he wytteth all his fyrst boke, *de theologia*. Whereof I shall besylve gather y^e hole effecte, and recite it here vnto you. There ben some (sayeth he) whose not onely eares and tonges, but also their ystes bene whitted and ready bent all to contencion and unprofitable disputation, whom I wolde wishe as they bene vehemente and earnest to reason the matter with tonge: so they were also ready and practiue to do

and providence of them that suffer evil, as by the malice of them that worketh the evil. Thus to them that be evil of themselves, everything setteth forward and increaseth their evil, be it of his own nature a thing never so good, like as contrarily, to them that studyeth and endeavoureth themselves to goodness, everything prevaileth them, and profiteth unto good, be it of his own nature a thing never so bad. As Saint Paul said, *hiis qui diligunt deum, omnia cooperantur in bonum*, even as out of most venomous worms is made treacle¹, the most sovereign medicine for the preservation of man's health in time of danger. Wherefore I would advise you all, that come to the reading or hearing of this book, which is the word of God, the most precious jewel, and most holy relic, that remaineth upon earth, that ye bring with you the fear of God, and that ye do it with all due reverence, and use your knowledge thereof, not to vain glory and frivolous disputation, but to the honour of God, increase of virtue, and edification both of yourselves and other. And to the intent that my words may be the more regarded, I will use in this part the authority of saint Gregory Nazianzen, like as in the other I did of St John Chrysostom. It appeareth that in his time there were some (as I fear me, there be also now at these days a great number) which were idle babblers, and talkers of the scripture out of season and all good order, and without any increase of virtue, or example of good living, to them he writeth all his first book, *de theologia*. Whereof I shall briefly gather the whole effect, and recite it here unto you. There be some (saith he) whose not only ears and tongues, but also their fists be whetted and ready bent all to contention and unprofitable disputation, whom I would wish as they be vehement and earnest to reason the matter with tongue; so they were also ready and practive² to do

¹ treacle: obsolete term for a *salve used as an antidote to poisons*

² practive: *habitually disposed to*

good dedes. But for asmuche as they, subuertynge the order of all godlynes, haue respecte onely to thys thyng. Howe they maye bynde and loose subtile questions, so that nowe euery market place, euery alehouse and tauerne, euery feasthouse: brefly euery company of men, euery assemblie of women is fylled with such talke. Sens the matter is so (sayth he) and that our fayth & holy religion of Christ begynneth to wax nothing els: but as it were a sophistrye or a talkyng crafte, I can no lesse do but saye somthing therunto. It is not fitte (sayth he) for euery mā to dispute y^e hygh questions of diuinite, nether is it to be done at all tymes: nether in euery audiēce must we discusse euery doubte: but we must knowe whā, to whom, and how farre we ought to enter into such matters. Fyrst, it is not for euery man: but it is for suche as be of exacte and exquisite iudgementes, and suche as haue spentē theyr tyme befoze in studie and contemplatyon: and suche as befoze haue clensted them selues aswell in soule, as bodye: or at the least, endeuored them selues to be made cleane. For it is daungerous (sayth he) for the vncleane to touch that thyng, that is mooste cleane: lyke as the sore eye taketh harne by lokynge upon the sunne. Secundarelye, not at all tymes but when we be reposed: and at reste frome all outwarde dregges and trouble, and when that oure headdes be not encombyed with other worldelye and wanderynge ymaginatyons: as yf a man shulde myngle balme and dytē together. For he that shall iudge and determyne suche matteres and doubtēs of scryptures, muste take hys tyme, when he maye applye hys wittes therunto, that he maye thereby the better see, and discerne what is trueth.

Thyrdelye where, and in what audience. There and amonge those that bene studious to learne, and not amonge suche as haue pleasure to tryfle with suche

good deeds. But forasmuch as they, subverting the order of all godliness, have respect only to this thing. How they may bind and loose subtle questions, so that now every marketplace, every alehouse and tavern, every feasthouse¹: briefly every company of men, every assembly of women is filled with such talk. Since the matter is so (saith he) and that our faith and holy religion of Christ beginneth to wax nothing else; but as it were a sophistry or a talking craft, I can no less do but say something thereunto. It is not fit (saith he) for every man to dispute the high questions of divinity, neither is it to be done at all times: neither in every audience must we discuss every doubt. But we must know when, to whom, and how far we ought to enter into such matters. First it is not for every man; but it is for such as be of exact and exquisite judgments, and such as have spent their time before in study and contemplation; and such as before have cleansed themselves as well in soul as body; or at the least endeavoured themselves to be made clean. For it is dangerous (saith he) for the unclean to touch that thing that is most clean; like as the sore eye taketh harm by looking upon the sun. Secondly, not at all times, but when we be reposed, and at rest from all outward dregs and trouble, and when that our heads be not encumbered with other worldly and wandering imaginations: as if a man should mingle balm and dirt together. For he that shall judge and determine such matters and doubts of scriptures, must take his time when he may apply his wits thereunto, that he may thereby the better see, and discern what is truth.

Thirdly, where, and in what audience. There and among those that be studious to learn, and not among such as have pleasure to trifle with such

¹ feasthouse: *banquet hall*

mattpers as with other thynges of pastyme, which repute for there chyeefe
 delicates the disputacion of hygh questiones, to shewe there wittes,
 learnynge and eloquence in reasonynge of hygh mattpers. Fourthlye, it is
 to be considered howe farre to wade in suche mattpers of diffycultie. For
 further (sayeth he) but as euery mannes owne capacitye wyll serue him,
 and agayne no further the the weaknes or intelligence of the other audience
 maye bere. For lyke as to great noyse hurteth the eare, to moch meat
 hurteth a mannes bodye, to heuie burdens hurteth the berers of them, to
 moche rayne doth moze hurte then good to the grounde, breiflye in all
 thynges to moch is nopouise, eue so weke wittes & weke cōscyences maye
 sone be oppressed w^t ouer harde questios, I say not this to disuade me frome
 y^e knowledge of God, & readynge or studyng of y^e scripture. For I saye, y^e
 it is as necessarye for the lyfe of mānes soule, as for y^e body to breathe. And
 yf it were possyble so to lyue, I woulde thynke it good for a man to spende
 all hys lyfe in that, and to do no other thyng, I comende y^e lawe whyche
 byddeth to meditate & studie the scripatures allwayes both nyght and
 daye, and Sermons and preachynge to be made both moynynge none and
 euentide. And God to be laweded and blessed in all tymes, to beddwarde,
 from bedde, in oure iorneyes, and all oure other woorkes. I forbidd not to
 reade, but I forbidd to reason. Nether forbidd I to reason so farre as is
 good and godlye. But I allowe not that is done oute of season, and out of
 measure and good order. A man maye eate to moche of honey be it neuer so
 swete, and ther is tyme for euery thyng, and that thyng, that is good is
 not good, yf it be ungodly done. Euen as a flower in wynter is oute of
 season, and as womans apparell becometh not a man, nether contrarilye,
 the mannes, the woman: nether is wepyng conuenient at a bydeale,
 nether laughynge at a beryall. Howe yf we can obserue and kepe that is
 comely and tymely in all other thynges, shall not we then the rather do the

matters, as with other things of pastime, which repute for their chief delicates the disputation of high questions, to show their wits, learning and eloquence in reasoning of high matters. Fourthly, it is to be considered how far to wade in such matters of difficulty. No further (saith he) but as every man's own capacity will serve him, and again no further than the weakness or intelligence of the other audience may bear. For like as to great noise hurteth the ear, too much meat hurteth the man's body, too heavy burdens hurt the bearers of them, too much rain doth more hurt than good to the ground, briefly in all things, too much is noyous¹; even so, weak wits and weak consciences may soon be oppressed with over hard questions. I say not this to dissuade men from the knowledge of God, and reading or studying of the scripture. For I say, that it is as necessary for the life of man's soul, as for the body to breathe. And if it were possible so to live, I would think it good for a man to spend all his life in that, and to do none other thing. I commend the law which biddeth to meditate and study the scriptures always both night and day, and Sermons and preachings to be made both morning, noon, and eventide. And God to be lauded and blessed in all times, to bedward, from bed, in our journeys, and all our other works, I forbid not to read, but I forbid to reason. Neither forbid I to reason so far as is good and godly. But I allow not that is done out of season, and out of measure and good order. A man may eat too much of honey, be it never so sweet, and there is time for everything, and that thing that is good is not good if it be ungodly done. Even as a flower in winter is out of season, and as woman's apparel becometh not a man, neither contrarily, the man's the woman; neither is weeping convenient² at a bridal³, neither laughing at a burial. Now if we can observe and keep that is comely and timely in all other things, shall not we then the rather do the

¹ noyous: *noxious, harmful*

² convenient: *agreeable, appropriate*

³ bridal: *wedding-feast*

same in the holpe scriptures? Let vs not runne furth as it were wyld hōse
that can suffre nether byddell in there mouthes, nor sytter on there backes.
Let us kepe us in our boundes, and nether let us go to farre on thone syde,
lest we retozne into Egypte, nether to farre ouer y^e other, lest we be
caried awaye to Babylon. Let vs not synge the songe of our Lorde in a
straunge lande, that is to saye, let vs not dispute the worde of God at all
auentures, aswell where it is not to be reasoned, as where it is, and aswell
in the eares of them y^e be not fytted therfore, as of thē that be. If we can no
wyse forbere, but that we must nedes dispute, let us forbere thus moche at
the leaste, to do it oute of tyme, and place conuenient. And let us entreate of
those thynges which be Holpe, Holylie, and vpon those thynges y^e bene
mysticall, mystically, & not to vtter the dyuine misteryes in the eares
vnworthye to heare them, but let vs knowe what is comely aswell in oure
syllence: and talkynge, as in oure garmentes werynge, in oure fedynge, in
oure gesture, in oure goynge, and all oure other be haupnge. Thys
contentyon and debate aboute scriptrue, and doubttes therof (specially
whan suche as pretende to be the fauorers and studentes therof cannot agre
within thē selves, doth moste hurte to our selves, and to the furtherynge of
the cause & quarells that we woulde haue forthered aboute all other
thynges. And we in this (sayeth he) be not unlyke to them that beyng
madde, set there awne houses on fyer, and that sle there awne chyldre, or
beate there awne parentes. I maruaile moch (sayth he) to recounte wherof
cometh all this desyre of vayne glōrye, wherof commeth all this tongue
itche, that we haue so moch delight to talke and clatter. And wherin is our
comunication? Not in the comendations of vertuous and good deades of
hospitalitie, of loue betwene christiane brother & brother, of loue betwene man
& wyfe, of virginitye and chastitie, and of almost towardes the poore. Not
in Psalmes and godly songes, not in lamentynge for oure synnes, not in
repressynge the affections of the body, not in prayers to God. We talke of
scripture, but in

same in the holy scriptures? Let us not run forth as it were wild horses, that can suffer neither bridle in their mouths, nor sit on their backs. Let us keep us in our bounds, and neither let us go too far on the one side, lest we return into Egypt, neither too far over the other, lest we be carried away to Babylon. Let us not sing the song of our Lord in a strange land, that is to say, let us not dispute the word of God at all adventures, as well where it is not to be reasoned, as where it is, and as well in the ears of them that be not fit therefore, as of them that be. If we can no wise forbear but that we must needs dispute, let us forbear thus much at the least, to do it out of time, and place convenient¹. And let us entreat of those things which be Holy, Holily, and upon those things that be mystical, mystically, and not to utter the divine mysteries in the ears unworthy to hear them, but let us know what is comely, as well in our silence, and talking, as in our garments wearing, in our feeding, in our gesture, in our goings, and all our other behaving. This contention and debate about scriptures, and doubts thereof (specially when such as do pretend to be the favourers and students thereof cannot agree within themselves) doth most hurt to ourselves, and to the furthering of the cause and quarrels that we would have furthered above all other things. And we in this (saith he) be not unlike to them that, being mad, set their own houses on fire, and that slay their own children, or beat their own parents. I marvel much (saith he) to recount whereof cometh all this desire of vain glory, whereof cometh all this tongue itch, that we have so much delight to talk and clatter. And wherein is our communication? Not in the commendations of virtuous and good deeds of hospitality, of love between Christian brother and brother, of love between man and wife, of virginity and chastity, and of alms toward the poor. Not in Psalms and godly songs, not in lamenting for our sins, not in repressing the affections of the body, not in prayers to God. We talk of scripture, but in

¹ convenient: *agreeable, appropriate*

y^e meane tyme we subdewe not our fleshe, by fastinge, wakynge, and
 wepyng, we make not this lyfe a meditation of death, we do not stryue to
 be Lordes of oure appetites & affections. We goo not aboute to pull downe
 our proude & hygh myndes to abate our fumpyshe & rancorous stomakes, to
 restrayne our lustes & bodely delectations, oure vndiscrete sozowes, oure
 lasciuious merthe, our inordinate lokynge, oure vsaciabie herpynge of
 vanities, oure speakynge without measure, oure incōuenient thoughtes, and
 breifly, to reforme oure lyfe and maners: but all oure holynes cōsysteth in
 talkynge. And we pardon eche other frome all good luyng, so that we
 may styck fast together in argumentacyon, as though there were no moo
 wayes to heauen, but thys alone the waye of speculatyon and knowledge
 (as they take it) but in very dead, it is rather the waye of superfluous
 contention and sophisticatio. Hetherto haue I recyted the mynde of
 Gregoꝛy Nazianzene in that booke which I spake of before. The same
 authour sayeth also in an other place that the learnynge of a Chrysten man
 ought to begynne of the feare of God, to ende in matpers of hygh
 speculatyō, and not cōtrarily to begynne with speculation and to ende in
 feare. For speculatio (sayeth he) other hye conynge and knowledge, yf it be
 not, staped with the byddell of feare to offende Godde is dangerous and
 enough to tumble a man hedelinge downe the hyll. Therfoze, sayeth he, the
 feare of God must be the fyrst begynnynge and as it were an abce or an
 introductio to all them that shall enter to the very trew and most frutefull
 knowledge of holy scriptures. Where as is the feare of God, there is,
 sayeth he, the keepynge of the commaundementes, and where as is the
 keepynge of the cōmaudemētes, there is the clensynge of the fleshe, which
 fleshe is a cloude before the soules eye, and suffereth it not puerlye to se the
 beame of y^e heuenly light. Where as is the clensynge of the fleshe, there is

the meantime we subdue not our flesh, by fasting, waking, and weeping, we make not this life a meditation of death, we do not strive to be Lords of our appetites and affections. We go not about to pull down our proud and high minds, to abate our fumish¹ and rancorous stomachs, to restrain our lusts and bodily delectations, our indiscreet sorrows, our lascivious mirth, our inordinate looking, our insatiable hearing of vanities, our speaking without measure, our inconvenient² thoughts, and briefly, to reform our life and manners: but all our holiness consisteth in talking. And we pardon each other from all good living, so that we may stick fast together in argumentation, as though there were no more ways to heaven but this alone, the way of speculation and knowledge (as they take it) but in very deed it is rather the way of superfluous contention and sophistication. Hitherto have I recited the mind of Gregory Nazianzen in that book which I spake of before. The same author saith also in another place that the learning of a Christian man ought to begin of the fear of God, to end in matters of high speculation; and not contrarily to begin with speculation and to end in fear. For speculation (saith he), other high cunning or knowledge, if it be not stayed³ with the bridle of fear to offend God is dangerous, and enough to tumble a man headlong down the hill. Therefore, saith he, the fear of God must be the first beginning, and as it were an ABC or an introduction to all them that shall enter into the very true and most fruitful knowledge of holy scriptures. Where as is the fear of God, there is (saith he) the keeping of the commandments, and where as is the keeping of the commandments, there is the cleansing of the flesh, which flesh is a cloud before the soul's eye, and suffereth it not purely to see the beam of the heavenly light. Where as is the cleansing of the flesh, there is

¹ fumish: *tending to produce bloating or flatulence*

² inconvenient: *disagreeable, inappropriate*

³ stayed: *supported*

the illumination of the holy ghost, thende of all oure desyres, and the very lyght wherby the verytie of scriptures is seen and percepued. This is the mynde and almost the wordes of Gregorie Nazianzene doctour of the greke churche of whom saynt Jerome sayth, that vnto hys tyme, the laten churche had no wytyer able to be compared, and to make an euen matche with him. Therfore to conclude this latter parte, euery man that commeth to the readyng of this holpe booke ought to byngne with hym fyrst and foremoste thys feare of almyghtye godde, and then nexte a fyne and stable purpose to refoyme hys awne selfe accordyng ther vnto, and so to contynue procede, and prospere frome tyme to tyme, shewyng hys selfe to be a sober and frutefull herer and lerner, which yf he doo, he shall proue at the lēgth well able to teache, though not with hys mouth, yet with hys lyuyng and good example, which is suer the most lyuely, and effecteouse foyme and maner of teachyng. He that otherwys intermedeyleth with this booke let hym be assured, that ons he shall make accompte therfore, when he shall haue sayde to hym as it is wrytten in the Prophete Dauid, Peccatori dicit deus &c. Vnto the ungodly sayde God, why doest thou preache my lawes, and takest my testament in thy mouth: Where as thou hatest to be refozmed, and hast caste my wordes behynde the. When thou sawest a thefe, thou consentyddest vnto hym, and hast bene partetaker with aduouterers. Thou hast lett thy mouth speake wyckednes, and with thy tonge thou hast setforth disceyte. Thou satest and spakest agaynst thy brother and hast sclaundered the awne mothers sonne. These thynges hast thou done, & I helde my tong and y^e thoughtest (wyckedly) that I am euen suche a one as thy selfe. But I wyl reprove the, and sett before the, the thynges that thou hast done. & consyder this, ye that forget God lest I plucke you a waye, and ther be none to deliuer you. Who so offereth me

the illumination of the holy ghost, the end of all our desires, and the very light whereby the verity of scriptures is seen and perceived. This is the mind and almost the words of Gregory Nazianzen, doctor of the Greek Church, of whom saint Jerome saith, that unto his time, the Latin Church had no writer able to be compared, and to make an even match with him. Therefore to conclude this latter part, every man that cometh to the reading of this holy book ought to bring with him first and foremost this fear of almighty God, and then next a firm and stable purpose to reform his own self according thereunto, and so to continue, proceed, and prosper from time to time, showing himself to be a sober and fruitful hearer and learner; which, if he do, he shall prove at the length well able to teach, though not with his mouth, yet with his living and good example, which is sure the most lively and effectuous form and manner of teaching. He that otherwise intermeddleth with this book let him be assured that once he shall make account therefore, when he shall have said to him as it is written in the Prophet David, *Peccatori dicit deus* &c. Unto the ungodly said God, why dost thou preach my laws, and takest my testament in thy mouth? Whereas thou hatest to be reformed, and hast cast my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedest unto him, and hast been partaker with advouterers¹. Thou hast let thy mouth speak wickedness, and with thy tongue thou hast set forth deceit. Thou sattest and spakest against thy brother, and hast slandered thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I held my tongue and thou thoughtest (wickedly) that I am even such a one as thyself. But I will reprove thee, and set before thee the things that thou hast done. O consider this, ye that forget God lest I pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you. Whoso offereth me

¹ advouterers: *adulterers*

thakes and prayse he honoureth me, and to hym that ordereth hys
conuersation ryght: wyl I thewe the saluation of godde.

God saue the kynge.

thanks and praise, he honoureth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation right, will I show the salvation of God.

God save the King.

A fructeful exhortation,

to the readyng and knowledge

of holie Scripture.

Wherto a Christiā mā there can be nothing, either more necessarie, or profitable, then the knowlege of holie scripture: for asmoche as in it is cōteined Goddes true wooꝝde settyng fooꝝth his gloꝛie, and also mannes duetie. And there is no trueth, noꝛ doctrine necessarie for our iustification & euerlastyng saluacion, but that is, (or maie be) dꝛawen out of that fountaine, & well of trueth. Wherefoze as many as be desirous to entre into the right & perfeict waie vnto God, must applie their mindes to knowe holie scripture without the whiche, thei can neither sufficiētly knowe God, & his wille, neither their office and duetie. And as drinke is pleasaunt to them, that be dꝛie, & meate to theim that be hungrie: so is the readyng, hearyng, searchoyng, & studyng of holie scripture, to them that be desirous to knowe God, or themselves, & to dooe his wille. And their stomaches onely, to loth & abhorre the heauenlie knowlege and foode of Goddes wooꝝde, that be so dꝛowned in worlde lie vanities, that thei neither fauour God, noꝛ any godlinesse: for that is the cause why thei desire soche vanities, rather the the true knowlege of God. As thei that are sicke of an ague whatseuer thei eate or dꝛinke (though it be neuer so pleasaunt) yet it is as bitter to them, as wormewoode, not for the bitternesse of the meate, but for the corrupte, & bitter humour, that is in their owne tounge & mouth: euen so is the swetenesse of Goddes wooꝝde, bitter, not of it self, but onely vnto them, that haue their mindes corrupted

A FRUITFUL EXHORTATION

to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture.

UNTO a Christian man there can be nothing either more necessary or profitable, than the knowledge of holy Scripture, forasmuch as in it is contained God's true word, setting forth his glory, and also man's duty. And there is no truth nor doctrine necessary for our justification and everlasting salvation, but that is (or may be) drawn out of that fountain and well of truth. Therefore as many as be desirous to enter into the right and perfect way unto God, must apply their minds to know holy Scripture, without the which, they can neither sufficiently know God and his will, neither their office and duty. And as drink is pleasant to them that be dry, and meat to them that be hungry: so is the reading, hearing, searching, and studying of holy Scripture, to them that be desirous to know God or themselves, and to do his will. And their stomachs only, to loathe and abhor the heavenly knowledge and food of God's word, that be so drowned in worldly vanities, that they neither favour God, nor any godliness: for that is the cause why they desire such vanities, rather than the true knowledge of God. As they that are sick of an ague, whatsoever they eat or drink (though it be never so pleasant) yet it is as bitter to them as wormwood, not for the bitterness of the meat, but for the corrupt and bitter humour that is in their own tongue and mouth: even so is the sweetness of God's word bitter, not of itself, but only unto them that have their minds corrupted

with lōg custome of sinne, & loue of this worlde. Therefore forsakynge the
 corrupt iudgement of carnal men, whiche care not, but for their carcasse,
 leat vs reuerently heare, & read holie Scriptures, whiche is the foode of the
 soule. Leat vs diligently searche for the welle of life, in the boke of the
 new & olde testament, and not run to the stinkyng poddles of mennes
 tradicions, diuised by mannes imaginaciō, for our iustification & saluacion.
 For in holie scripture is fully contained, what we ought to dooe, and what
 to eschewe, what to beleue, what to loue, and what to looke for at Goddes
 handes at length. In these booke we shall finde the father, from whom,
 the sonne, by who, and the holie ghost, in whom, all thinges haue their
 beyng and conseruacion, and these three persones, to bee but one God, & one
 substaunce. In these booke we maie learne to knowe our selues, how vile
 and miserable we be, and also to knowe god, how good he is himself, and
 how he communicateth his goodnesse unto us, and to al creatures. We
 maie learne also in these booke, to knowe Goddes will and pleasure,
 asmuch as (for this preset time) is conuenient for vs to knowe. And (as the
 greate clerke, and godlie preacher saincte Iho Chrysostome saith)
 whatsoeuer is required to saluacion of man, is fully contained in the
 scripture of God. He that is ignoraunt, maie there learne and haue
 knowlege: he that is harde harted, and an obstinate sinner, shall there finde
 eternall tormentes (prepared of Goddes iustice) to make him afraied, and
 to mollifie him. He that is oppressed with miserie in this worlde, shall there
 finde relief in the promises of eternal life, to his greate consolacion and
 coumforte. He that is wounded (by the deuill) unto death shall finde there
 Medecine, whereby he maie be restored again unto health. If it shall
 require to teache any trueth, or reprove false doctrine, to rebuke any vice,
 to commende any vertue, to geve good counsaill, to coumfort, or to exhort, or

with long custom of sin and love of this world. Therefore forsaking the corrupt judgement of carnal men, which care not but for their carcase: let us reverently hear and read holy Scriptures, which is the food of the soul. Let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the New and Old Testament, and not run to the stinking puddles of men's traditions (devised by man's imagination) for our justification and salvation. For in holy Scripture is fully contained what we ought to do, and what to eschew; what to believe, what to love, and what to look for at God's hands at length. In these Books we shall finde the Father *from* whom, the Son *by* whom, and the Holy Ghost *in* whom all things have their being and conservation, and these three persons to be but one God, and one substance. In these books we may learn to know ourselves, how vile and miserable we be, and also to know God, how good he is himself, and how he communicateth his goodness unto us and to all creatures. We may learn also in these books to know God's will and pleasure, as much as (for this present time) is convenient¹ for us to know. And (as the great clerk and godly preacher Saint John Chrysostom saith) whatsoever is required to the salvation of man, is fully contained in the Scripture of God. He that is ignorant, may there learn and have knowledge. He that is hard hearted, and an obstinate sinner, shall there find everlasting torments (prepared of God's justice) to make him afraid, and to mollify him. He that is oppressed with misery in this world, shall there find relief in the promises of eternal life, to his great consolation and comfort. He that is wounded (by the Devil) unto death shall find there medicine whereby he may be restored again unto health. If it shall require to teach any truth, or reprove false doctrine, to rebuke any vice, to commend any virtue, to give good counsel, to comfort or to exhort, or

¹ convenient: *agreeable, appropriate*

to dooe any other thing, requisite for our saluacion, all those thinges, (saith saint Chrysostome) we maie learne plētifullly of the scripture. There is (saith *Fulgentius*) abundauntly enough, bothe for men to eate, and children to sucke. There is, whatsoeuer is conueniente for all ages, and for all degrees, and sortes of menne. These bokes therfore ought to be moche in our handes, in our pies, in our eares, in our mouthes, but moſte of all in our hartes. For the scripture of God is the heauenlie meate of our ſoules, the hearyng & keepyng of it maketh vs blessed, sanctifieth vs, and maketh vs holie, it couerteth our ſoules: it is a light lanterne to our feete: it is a ſure, a constant, and a perpetuall instrument of ſaluacion, it geueth wiſedome to the humble and lowelie hartes: it counſorteth, maketh glad, chereth and cheriſheth our conſcience: it is a moze excellēt iewel or treasure, then any golde or precious ſtone: It is moze ſweter then Honie, or honie combe: it is called the beſt parte, the whiche Marie did chouſe, for it hath in it, euerlaſtyng comfort. The woordes of holie ſcripture be called woordes of euerlaſtyng life: for thei be Goddes instrument, ordeined for the ſame purpoſe. Thei haue power to couert through goddes promiſe, and thei be effectuall, through goddes aſſiſtence, and (beyng receiued in a faithfull hart) thei haue euer an heauenlie ſpirituall woorking in them, thei are liuelie, quicke, and mightie in operacion, and ſharper then any ii edged ſworde, and entreth through, euen vnto the diuidyng a ſundre of the ſoule and the ſpिरite, of the iointes and the marrowe. Chriſte calleth him a wiſe builder, that buildeth vpon his worde, vpon his ſure and ſubſtanciall foundacio. By this worde of god, we ſhalbe iudged: for the worde that I ſpeake (ſaith Chriſt) is it y^e ſhal iudge in the laſt daie. He that kepeth the woorde of Chriſt, is promiſed the loue & fauour of god, & that he ſhalbe the manſion place, or tēple of the bleſſed Trinitie. This worde, whoſoeuer is

to do any other thing requisite for our salvation, all those things (saith Saint Chrysostom) we may learn plentifully of the Scripture. There is (saith Fulgentius) abundantly enough, both for men to eat, and children to suck. There is, whatsoever is convenient¹ for all ages, and for all degrees and sorts of men. These Books therefore ought to be much in our hands, in our eyes, in our ears, in our mouths, but most of all in our hearts. For the Scripture of God is the heavenly meat of our souls, the hearing and keeping of it maketh us blessed, sanctifieth us, and maketh us holy, it converteth our souls; it is a light lantern to our feet; it is a sure, a constant, and a perpetual instrument of salvation, it giveth wisdom to the humble and lowly hearts; it comforteth, maketh glad, cheereth, and cherisheth our conscience: it is a more excellent jewell or treasure, than any gold or precious stone; it is more sweet than honey, or honeycomb; it is called the best part, which Mary did choose, for it hath in it perpetual comfort. The words of holy Scripture be called words of everlasting life: for they be God's instrument, ordained for the same purpose. They have power to convert through God's promise, and they be effectual through God's assistance, and (being received in a faithful heart) they have ever an heavenly spiritual working in them: they are lively, quick, and mighty in operation, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and entereth through, even unto the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, of the joints and the marrow. Christ calleth him a wise builder, that buildeth upon his word, upon his sure and substantial foundation. By this word of God, we shall be judged: for the word that I speak (saith Christ) is it, that shall judge in the last day. He that keepeth the word of Christ, is promised the love and favour of God, and that he shall be the mansion place or temple of the blessed Trinity. This word, whosoever is

¹ convenient: *agreeable, appropriate*

diligent to read, & in his harte to print y^e he readeth, the great affection to the transitorie thinges of this worlde, shalbe minished in him, and the great desire of heauenly thinges (that be therein promised of God) shall encrease in him. And there is nothing, that so muche establissheth our faith, and trust in God, that so moche conserueth innocencie, and purenesse of the harte, and also of outward godlie life and conuersacion, as continuall readynge and meditacion of Goddes woorde. For that thing, whiche (by perpetuall vse of readynge of holie scripture, and diligente searchynge of the same) is depely printed, and grauen in the harte, at length tourneth almoste into nature. And moreouer, the effecte and vertue of goddes woorde, is to illuminate the ignoraunt, & to geue more light vnto the that faithfully and diligently read it, to counfort their hartes, and to encourage them to perfourme that, whiche of God is commaunded. It teacheth paciēce in all aduersitie, in prosperitie, humblenesse: what honour is due vnto God, what mercie and charitie to our neighbor. It geueth good counsaill in all doubtfull thinges. It sheweth of whom wee shall looke for aide and helpe in all perilles, and that God is the onely geuer of victorie, in all batailles and temptacions of our enemies, bodily and ghostely. And in readynge of Goddes woorde, he mooste profiteth not alwaies, that is mooste readie in tournynge of the booke, or in sayng of it without the booke, but he that is tourned into it, that is mooste inspired with the holie ghoste, mooste in his harte and life altred and transfourmed into that thing, which he readeth: he that is daiely lesse and lesse proud, lesse irefull, lesse couetous, and lesse desirous of worldeley and vaine pleasures: he that daily (forsakyng his olde vicious life) encreaseth in vertue more and more. And to bee shorte, there is

diligent to read, and in his heart to print that he readeth, the great affection to the transitory things of this world, shall be minished¹ in him, and the great desire of heavenly things (that be therein promised of God) shall increase in him. And there is nothing that so much establisheth our faith and trust in God, that so much conserveth innocence and pureness of the heart, and also of outward godly life and conversation, as continual reading and meditation of God's word. For that thing, which (by perpetual use of reading of holy scripture, and diligent searching of the same) is deeply printed and graven in the heart, at length turneth almost into nature. And moreover, the effect and virtue of God's word is, to illuminate the ignorant, and to give more light unto them that faithfully and diligently read it, to comfort their hearts, and to encourage them to perform that which of God is commanded. It teacheth patience in all adversity; in prosperity, humbleness: what honour is due unto God, what mercy and charity to our neighbor. It giveth good counsel in all doubtful things. It showeth of whom we shall look for aid and help in all perils, and that God is the only giver of victory, in all battles and temptations of our enemies, bodily and ghostly. And in reading of God's word, he most profiteth not always, that is most ready in turning of the book, or in saying of it without the book, but he that is turned into it, that is most inspired with the holy Ghost, most in his heart and life altered and transformed into that thing which he readeth: he that is daily less and less proud, less ireful², less covetous, and less desirous of worldly and vain pleasures: he that daily (forsaking his old vicious life) increaseth in virtue more and more. And to be short, there is

¹ minished: *diminished, lessened*

² ireful: *angry, wrathful*

nothing, that moze mainteineth godlinesse of the minde, and expelleth vngodlinesse, then dooeth the continuall readyng, or hearyng of Goddes worde, if it be ioigned with a godlie minde, and a good affectio, to knowe and folowe Goddes will. For without a single yie, pure entent and good minde, nothing is allowed for good before God. And on the other side, nothing moze obscureth Christ, and the glorie of God, nor induceth moze blindnesse, and all kindes of vices, then dooeth the ignoraunce of Goddes woorde.

¶ The second parte of the Ser-
mone of the holie scripture.

¶ The first parte of this homelie which exhorteth to the knowelege of holie scripture, was declared, wherefore the knowelege of the same is necessarie and profitable to al mē. And that by the true knowelege and understādyng of scripture, the mooste necessarie pointes of our duetie towarde God and our neighboures, are also knowen. Now as concernyng the same matier, you shall heare what foloweth.

If we professe Christ, why be we not ashamed to be ignorant in his doctrine? Seyng that euery man is ashamed to be ignorant in that learning which he professeth. That man is ashamed to be called a Philosopher, whiche readeth not the booke of Philosophie, & to be called a lawier, Astronomer, or a Physicion, that is ignorant in the booke of lawe, Astronomie, & Physicke. Now can any man then say that he professeth Christ, and his religion, if he will not applie himselfe (as ferforth as he can or maie conueniētly) to read & heare, and so to knowe the booke of Christes Gospell & doctrine? Although other sciences be good, and to be

nothing that more maintaineth godliness of the mind, and expelleth ungodliness, than doth the continual reading or hearing of God's word, if it be joined with a godly mind, and a good affection, to know and follow God's will. For without a single eye, pure intent, and good mind, nothing is allowed for good before God. And on the other side, nothing more obscureth Christ, and the glory of God, nor induceth more blindness, and all kinds of vices, than doth the ignorance of God's word.

The Second Part of the Sermon
of the Holy Scripture.

In the first part of this homily, which exhorteth to the knowledge of holy Scripture, was declared wherefore the knowledge of the same is necessary and profitable to all men, and that by the true knowledge and understanding of Scripture, the most necessary points of our duty towards God and our neighbours are also known. Now as concerning the same matter, you shall hear what followeth.

If we profess Christ, why be we not ashamed to be ignorant in his doctrine? Seeing that every man is ashamed to be ignorant in that learning which he professeth. That man is ashamed to be called a Philosopher, which readeth not the books of Philosophy, and to be called a Lawyer, Astronomer, or a Physician, that is ignorant in the books of Law, Astronomy, and Physic. Now can any man then say that he professeth Christ and his religion, if he will not apply himself (as far forth as he can or may conveniently¹) to read and hear, and so to know the books of Christ's Gospel and doctrine? Although other sciences be good, and to be

¹ conveniently: *agreeably, appropriately*

learned, yet no man can denie, but this is the chief, and passeth all other incomparably. What excuse shall wee therefore make (at the last daie before Christ) that delite to read or heare mennes phantasies and inuencions, more then his moste holie gospel, & will finde no time to doo that, whiche chiefly (aboue all thinges) wee should doe, & wil rather read other thinges, then that, for the whiche we ought rather to leaue readyng of al other thinges? Let vs therefore applie our selues, as perfoothe as we can haue time & leasure to knowe Goddes woorde, by diligent hearing and readyng therof, as many as professe God, and haue faith and trust in him. But thei that haue no good affeccion to Goddes woorde (to colour this their faulte) allege commonly twoo vain and feigned excuses. Some goe aboute to excuse theim, by their awne frailnesse and fearefulnesse, sayng: that thei dare not read holie Scripture, least through their ignoraunce, thei should fal into any errour. Other pretende, that the difficultie to vnderstande it, and the hardnesse therof is so great, that it is mete to be read onely of clerkes and learned me. As touchyng the first, ignoraunce of goddes woorde, is the cause of all errour: as Christe himselte affirmed to the Sadduces, sayng: that thei erred, because thei knewe not the Scripture. How should thei then eschewe errour, that wil be stil ignoraunt? And how should thei come out of ignoraunce, that wil not read nor heare that thing, whiche should geue theim knowelege? He y^e now hath moste knowelege, was at the first ignoraunt, yet he forbare not to read, for feare he should fall into errour: but he diligently read, least he should remain in ignoraunce, and through ignoraunce, in error.

And if you will not knowe the trueth of god, (a thing moste necessarie for you) least you fal into errour: by the same reason you maie then lie still, and neuer go, least (if you goe) you fall in the mire, nor eate any good

learned, yet no man can deny, but this is the chief, and passeth all other incomparably. What excuse shall we therefore make (at the last day before Christ) that delight to read or hear men's fantasies and inventions, more than his most holy Gospel, and will find no time to do that which chiefly (above all things) we should do, and will rather read other things than that, for the which we ought rather to leave reading of all other things? Let us therefore apply ourselves, as far forth as we can have time and leisure, to know God's word, by diligent hearing and reading thereof, as many as profess God, and have faith and trust in him. But they that have no good affection to God's word (to colour this their fault) allege commonly two vain and feigned excuses. Some go about to excuse them by their own frailness and fearfulness, saying that they dare not read holy Scripture, lest through their ignorance, they should fall into any error. Other pretend that the difficulty to understand it, and the hardness thereof is so great, that it is meet to be read only of Clerks and learned men. As touching the first: Ignorance of God's word is the cause of all error, as Christ himself affirmed to the Sadducees, saying that they erred, because they knew not the Scripture. How should they then eschew error, that will be still ignorant? And how should they come out of ignorance, that will not read nor hear that thing which should give them knowledge? He that now hath most knowledge, was at the first ignorant, yet he forbore not to read, for fear he should fall into error; but he diligently read, lest he should remain in ignorance, and through ignorance in error.

And if you will not know the truth of God (a thing most necessary for you) lest you fall into error, by the same reason you may then lie still, and never go, lest (if you go) you fall in the mire: nor eat any good

meate, least you take a surfette, noꝝ solue your coꝛne, noꝝ labour in your occupacion, noꝝ vse your merchandise, foꝛ feare you lose your seide, your labour, your stocke, and so by that reason, it should be best foꝛ you to liue idly, and neuer to take in hande to dooe any maner of good thing, least peraduenture some euill thing maie chaunce therof. And if you be afraied to falle into errour, by readyng of holie Scripture: I shall shewe you, how you maie read it without daunger of errour. Read it humbly with a meeke and a lowely heart, to the intent you maie glozifie God, and not your selfe, with the knowelege of it: and read it not without daily praying to god that he would directe your readyng to good effecte, & take vpon you to expoune it no foꝛtther then you can plainly vnderstande it. Foꝛ (as Saincte Augustine saieth) the knowelege of holie Scripture, is a great, large, and a high palace, but the dooze is very lowe: so that the high and arrogant manne, cannot run in, but he must stoupe lowe: and humble himself, that shal entre into it. Presumption and arrogancie, is the mother of all errour: and humilitie needeth to feare no errour. foꝛ humilitie wil on ly searche to knowe the trueth, it will searche, and will conferre one place with another: and where it cannot finde the sence, it will praie, it wil enquire of other that knowe and wil not presumptuously & rashely define any thing, whiche it knoweth not. Therefore, the humble manne maie searche any trueth boldly in the Scripture, without any daunger of errour. And if he bee ignoꝛaunt, he ought the more to reade, and to search holie Scripture, to bring him out of ignoꝛaunce. I saie not naie, but a man maie prospere, with onely hearyng, but he maie moche moze prospere, with bothe hearyng and readyng. This haue I saied, as touchyng the feare to read, through ignoꝛaunce of the persone. And concernyng the difficultie of Scripture, he that is so weake, that he is not hable to brooke stronge meate:

meat, lest you take a surfeit, nor sow your corn, nor labour in your occupation, nor use your merchandise, for fear you lose your seed, your labour, your stock, and so by that reason, it should be best for you to live idly, and never to take in hand to do any manner of good thing, lest peradventure¹ some evil thing may chance thereof. And if you be afraid to fall into error, by reading of holy Scripture: I shall shew you how you may read it without danger of error. Read it humbly with a meek and lowly heart, to the intent you may glorify God, and not yourself, with the knowledge of it: and read it not without daily praying to God, that he would direct your reading to good effect: and take upon you to expound it no further, then you can plainly understand it. For (as Saint Augustine saith) the knowledge of holy Scripture, is a great, large, and a high palace, but the door is very low, so that the high and arrogant man cannot run in: but he must stoop low, and humble himself, that shall enter into it. Presumption and arrogance is the mother of all error: and humility needeth to fear no error. For humility will only search to know the truth, it will search, and will confer one place with another, and where it cannot find the sense, it will pray, it will enquire of others that know, and will not presumptuously and rashly define anything, which it knoweth not. Therefore the humble man may search any truth boldly in the Scripture, without any danger of error. And if he be ignorant, he ought the more to read and to search holy Scripture, to bring him out of ignorance. I say not nay, but a man may prosper with only hearing, but he may much more prosper, with both hearing and reading. This have I said, as touching the fear to read, through ignorance of the person. And concerning the difficulty of Scripture, he that is so weak that he is not able to brook strong meat,

¹ peradventure: *perhaps*

yet he maie sucke the sweete and tender milke, and differre the reste, vntil
 he waxe stronger, and come to moze knowlege. For God receiueth the
 learned and vnlearned, and casteth awaie none, but is indifferent vnto al.
 And the Scripture is full, aswell of lowe vallies, plaine waies, and easie
 for euery manne to vse, and to walke in: as also of high hilles and
 moūtaines, which fewe menne can ascende vnto. And whosoever geueth his
 minde to holie Scriptures, with diligent studie, and feruent desire, it cannot
 be (saieyth Saincte Ihon Chrysostome) that he should bee destitute of helpe.
 For either GOD Almighty will sende him some Godlie Doctour to
 instructe him, as he did to instructe Eunuchus, a noble man of Ethiope,
 and thesaurer vnto Quene Candace, who hauyng a great affection to
 read the Scripture (although he vnderstode it not) yet for the desire that he
 had vnto Goddes woorde, God sent his Apostle Philippe, to declare vnto
 him the true sense of the Scripture, that he readde: or elles, if we lacke a
 learned man to instructe & teache vs, yet God him selfe from aboue, will
 geue light vnto our mindes, & teache vs those thinges which are necessarie
 for vs, and wherin we be ignozaunt. And in an other place, Chrysostome
 saieyth: that mannes humaine & woꝛldelie wisedome or science, needeth not
 to the vnderstandyng of scripture, but the reuelacion of the holie Ghoste,
 who inspireth the true sense vnto the, that with humilitie & diligēce dooe
 searche therfore. He that asketh, shal haue, & he that seeketh shal finde, and
 he that knocketh, shal haue the doze open. If we reade ones, twise, or thise,
 and vnderstande not: Let vs not ceasse so, but stil continue readyng,
 praiyng, askyng of othe, and so by still knockyng (at the last) the dooze
 shalbe opened, (as Saincte Augustine saieyth.) Although many thinges in
 the Scripture bee spoken in obscure misteries, yet there is nothing spoken
 vnder darke misteries, in one place, but the selfe same thing in other places,

yet he may suck the sweet and tender milk, and defer the rest, until he wax¹ stronger, and come to more knowledge. For God receiveth the learned and unlearned, and casteth away none, but is indifferent² unto all. And the Scripture is full, as well of low valleys, plain ways, and easy for every man to use, and to walk in: as also of high hills and mountains, which few men can ascend unto.

And whosoever giveth his mind to holy Scriptures, with diligent study and fervent desire, it can not be (saith Saint Chrysostom) that he should be destitute of help. For either God Almighty will send him some godly doctor, to instruct him, as he did to instruct Eunuchus, a noble man of Ethiopia, and Treasurer unto Queen Candace, who having a great affection to read the Scripture (although he understood it not) yet for the desire that he had unto God's word, God sent his Apostle Philip to declare unto him the true sense of the Scripture that he read: or else, if we lack a learned man to instruct and teach us, yet God himself from above, will give light unto our minds, and teach us those things which are necessary for us, and wherein we be ignorant. And in another place Chrysostom saith, that man's humane and worldly wisdom or science, needeth not to the understanding of Scripture, but the revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspireth the true sense unto them, that with humility and diligence do search therefore. He that asketh, shall have, and he that seeketh shall find, and he that knocketh, shall have the door open. If we read once, twice, or thrice, and understand not, let us not cease so, but still continue reading, praying, asking of other, and so by still knocking (at the last) the door shall be opened (as Saint Augustine saith). Although many things in the Scripture be spoken in obscure mysteries, yet there is nothing spoken under dark mysteries in one place, but the self-same thing in other places

¹ wax: *grow*

² indifferent: in this usage, *even-handed, nonpartisan*

is spoken moze familiarly and plainely, to the capacitie bothe of learned and vnlearned. And those thinges in the Scripture that bee plaine to vnderstande, and necessarie for saluacion, euery mannes duetie is to learne them, to printe them in memorie, and effectually to exercise theim. And as for the obscure misteries, to bee contented to bee ignozaunt in them, vntill soche time as it shal please GOD, to open those thinges vnto him. In the meane season, if he lacke either aptenesse, or oportunitie, God wil not impute it to his folie: but yet it behoueth not, that soche as be apte, should sette aside readyng, because some other be vnapte to read: neuerthelesse, for the difficultie of soche places, the readyng of the whole, ought not to be sette aparte. And briezly to conclude (as S. Augustine saieth) by the Scripture, all menne bee amended: weake menne bee strengthened, and strong menne be counforted. So that surely, none be enemies to the readyng of Goddes wooorde, but soche as either be so ignozaunt, that thei knowe not how wholsome a thing it is, or elles bee so sicke, that thei hate the moste counfortable medicine, that should heale theim: Or so vngodlie, that thei would wishe the people, stil to continue in blindenesse and ignozaunce of God.

Thus we haue briezely touched some parte of the commodities of Goddes holie wooorde, whiche is one of Goddes chief and principall benefeictes, geuen & declared to mankinde here in earth. Let vs thake God hartely, for this his great and special gifte, beneficial fauour, and fatherlie prouidence. Let vs be glad to reuiue this precious gifte, of our heauenlie father. Let vs heare, read, and knowe these holie rules, Iniunctiones, and statutes of our Christian religion, and vpon that wee haue made profession to God at our Baptisme. Let vs with feare and reuerence laie vp (in the cheste of our hartes) these necessarie and fructeful Lessones. Let vs

is spoken more familiarly and plainly, to the capacity both of learned and unlearned. And those things in the Scripture that be plain to understand, and necessary for salvation, every man's duty is to learn them, to print them in memory, and effectually to exercise them. And as for the obscure mysteries, to be contented to be ignorant in them, until such time as it shall please God to open those things unto him. In the mean season, if he lack either aptness or opportunity, God will not impute it to his folly: but yet it behoveth not, that such as be apt, should set aside reading, because some other be unapt to read: nevertheless, for the difficulty of such places, the reading of the whole ought not to be set apart. And briefly to conclude, (as Saint Augustine saith) by the Scripture, all men be amended, weak men be strengthened, and strong men be comforted. So that surely, none be enemies to the reading of God's word, but such as either be so ignorant, that they know not how wholesome a thing it is: or else be so sick, that they hate the most comfortable medicine that should heale them: or so ungodly, that they would wish the people still to continue in blindness and ignorance of God.

Thus we have briefly touched some part of the commodities of God's holy word, which is one of God's chief and principal benefits, given and declared to mankind here in earth. Let us thank God heartily, for this his great and special gift, beneficial favor, and fatherly providence. Let us be glad to revive this precious gift of our heavenly Father. Let us hear, read, and know these holy rules, injunctions, and statutes of our Christian religion, and upon that we have made profession to God at our baptism. Let us with fear and reverence lay up (in the chest of our hearts) these necessary and fruitful lessons. Let us

nighte and daie muse, and haue meditation and contemplacion in theim. Let vs ruminare, & (as it were) chelwe the cudde, that we maie haue the sweete ieuſe, ſpirituell effecte, marrowe, honie, kernel, taſt, counſorte & conſolation of theim. Let vs ſtaighe, quiete, and certifie our conſciences with the moſte infallible certaintie, trueth, and perpetual aſſuraunce of theim. Let vs praie to God (the onely aucthour of theſe heauenlie meditacioneſ) that wee maie ſpeake, thinke, beleue, liue and departe hens, accorɔdyng to the whoſome doctrine, and verities of theim. And by that meanes, in this worlde wee ſhall haue Goddes pꝛotectiõ, fauour, & grace with the unſpeakeable ſolace of peace, quietneſſe of conſcience: and after this miſerable life, wee ſhall enioie the endeſſe bleſſe and glozie of heauen, whiche he graunt vs al, that died for vs all, Jeſus Chriſte: to whom, with the Father & the holie Ghoſte, be al honour & glozie, bothe now, and everlaſtingly. Amen.

night and day muse, and have meditation and contemplation in them. Let us ruminare, and (as it were) chew the cud, that we may have the sweet juice, spiritual effect, marrow, honey, kernel, taste, comfort and consolation of them. Let us stay¹, quiet, and certify² our consciences, with the most infallible certainty, truth, and perpetual assurance of them. Let us pray to God (the only author of these heavenly meditations) that we may speak, think, believe, live and depart hence, according to the wholesome doctrine, and verities of them. And by that means, in this world we shall have God's protection, favour, and grace, with the unspeakable solace of peace, and quietness of conscience, and after this miserable life, we shall enjoy the endless bliss and glory of heaven: which he grant us all that died for us all, Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, both now and everlastingly. Amen.

¹ stay: *support*

² certify: *assure*